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ABSTRACT

This book is an updated version of the Texas Office of Early Childhood Development's 1974 publication, "46 Things You Need to Know About Texas Children: The Darker Side of Childhood." This update targets all Texan children in need, from birth through 12 years of age. It contains facts about disadvantaged children from low-income settings and information about middle-class children who are in need of quality child care and rural children who are in need of quality education. The book is divided into eight sections: (1) "A Texas Profile" gives overall changes in the state's population, economy, and workforce; (2) "Families in Poverty" chronicles the problems of poverty and the growing underclass; (3) "Services" indicates service areas that need to be improved in order to address the needs of poor children and their families; (4) "Health" refers to the child's growth and development; (5) "Education" addresses a child's future opportunities; (6) "Abused and Troubled Children" refers to troubled families, runaways, and victims of abuse; (7) "Child Care" targets the working mother and the unattended child; and (8) "Toward Prevention" points to programs and services that can critically improve the lives of many Texas children while reducing the need for costly expenditures in later years. (NB)

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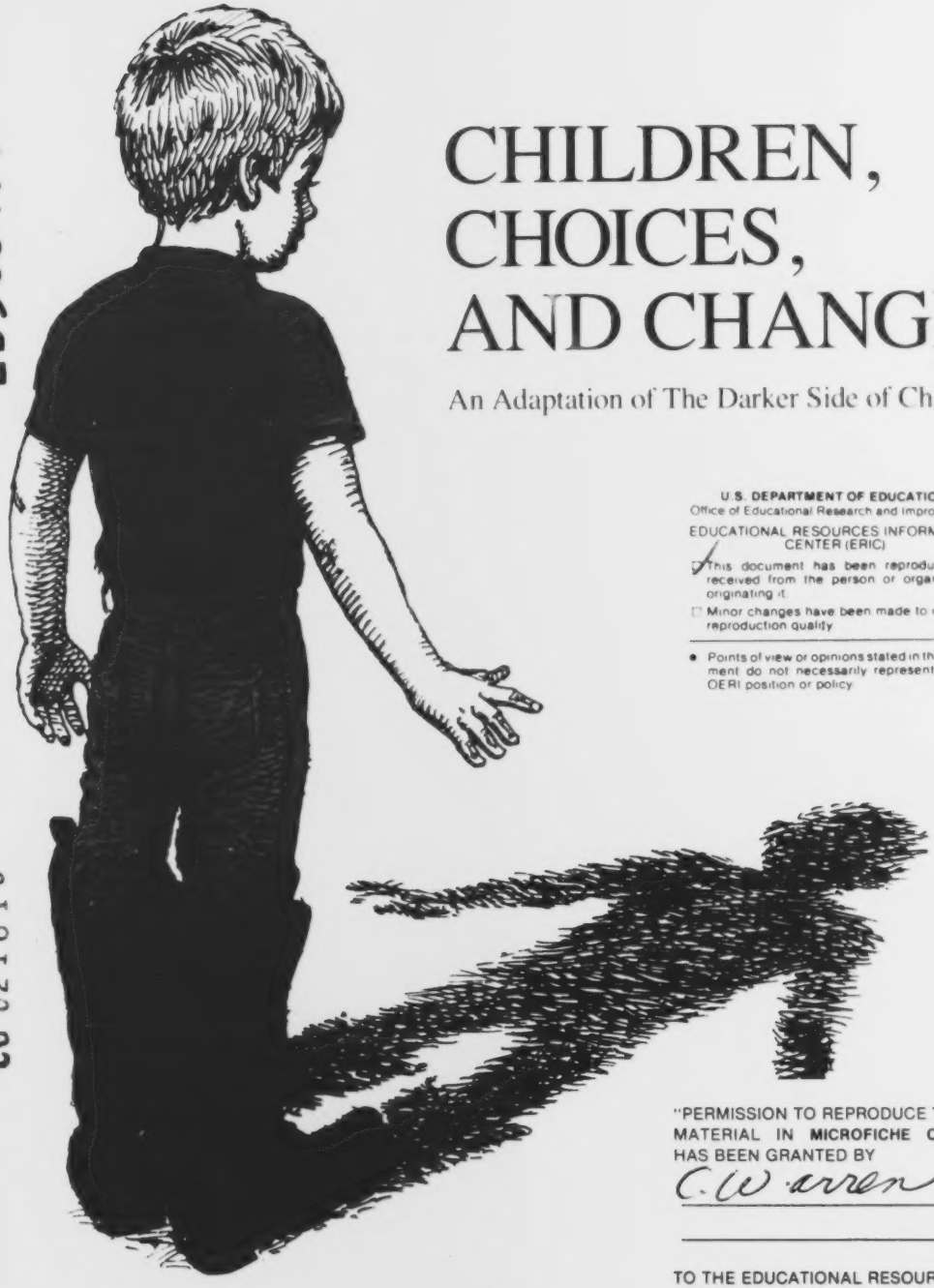

CHILDREN, CHOICES, AND CHANGE

An Adaptation of The Darker Side of Childhood

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CHILDREN, CHOICES, AND CHANGE

An Adaptation of The Darker Side of Childhood

Lorwen Connie Harris

Hogg Foundation for Mental Health
The University of Texas
Austin, Texas 78713
1988

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FOREWORD

I would have preferred that this book be titled "The Brighter Side of Childhood," but to my dismay, that was not to be. It is still "A Darker Side" for children in Texas.

Eighteen years ago, the Hogg Foundation prepared a report at the request of Governor Preston Smith on the needs of Texas children. The report, written by Dr. Robert L. Sutherland and Dr. Bernice Milburn Moore, emphasized that "no less than the future of the state of Texas--its economic, social, mental, and physical health--depends upon the earliest possible assistance made available to each Texas family with infants and young children." As a result of this report, coupled with an interagency document developed with similar goals and conclusions, Governor Smith established an Office of Early Childhood Development (OECD) in the Governor's office in January 1971. In September of the same year, the Office of Early Childhood Development was moved to the Texas Department of Community Affairs (TDCA).

One objective of OECD was to establish a database of information about Texas children. Subsequently, in 1974, the office published *46 Things You Need to Know About Texas Children: The Darker Side of Childhood.* The book addressed conditions in family life, health, nutrition, child care, and public services for young children from birth through six years of age. Four years later, the office produced an expanded version with a broader age range--children from birth through 18 years of age--and a larger scope, adding education, troubled youth, and handicapped children to the list of issues. By this time, OECD had been renamed the Early Childhood Development Division of TDCA. Unfortunately, funding dwindled over the next few years, and the

division disappeared altogether by the early 1980s.

These versions of *The Darker Side of Childhood* were for parents, professionals, business leaders, public officials, and the community at large to use in assessing needs and planning programs for children and their families. People have continued to use these two publications even though the information is out of date. In addition, the format, content and purpose of the publications have been imitated by other states throughout the nation.

In 1987, the Hogg Foundation had the vision to establish the Commission for the Mental Health of Children and Their Families to recommend action, both public and private, to address the serious issues facing many Texas children. One outgrowth of the Commission's early discussions is the current updated version, entitled *Children, Choices, and Change*. This publication targets all children in need, from birth through 12 years of age, and includes issues pertaining to teenage pregnancy and delinquency. In addition to facts about disadvantaged children from low-income settings, it contains information about middle-class children who are in need of quality child care and rural children who are in need of quality education. As the statistics show, growing up in Texas continues to have its "darker side."

In publishing this book, the Hogg Foundation, under the leadership of Dr. Wayne Holtzman, has once again steered Texas onto a course of improving conditions for children and their families. As mentioned in the second publication, "statistics are not people; they are only numbers. They cannot convey the pain, the frustration, the despair that many Texas

children face." Let us hope that this book will take some small step toward helping to alleviate that frustration and despair and produce a "brighter side" of childhood.

Jeannette Watson
Former Director, Early Childhood
Development Division, TDCA
May 1988

INTRODUCTION

The environment in which Texas children grow up is crucial to their future and to the future of the state. Over 450,000 Texas families were documented as living in poverty in 1985; slightly more two-parent families were living in poverty than single-parent families.{1} Many of these two-parent families represent the "working poor," with at least one parent employed at minimum wage. Since minimum wage has not increased for the past seven years, these families are left with few resources to rear their children in a world that is rapidly becoming a global society.

Poverty follows a vicious cycle. It sets the stage for every form of childhood malady: infant mortality, health problems, child abuse, learning disabilities, malnutrition, and mental health problems. When poverty children grow up, they are likely to drop out of school, have an early pregnancy, abuse drugs and alcohol, depend on public assistance, or break the law. Almost 20 percent of the state's population is poor, and a black or Hispanic child is twice as likely to be poor as an Anglo child.{1}

In many cases, the parents of today's Texas children who are from low-income backgrounds are themselves without high school educations, are functionally illiterate, and are often unemployed. These parents are ill-equipped to help prepare their children to join a literate work force composed of people who can read and write, compute, and analyze. Consequently, Texas runs the risk of creating a "permanent underclass" by the 21st century.

High quality, comprehensive early childhood development programs such as Head Start have helped disadvantaged,

poor children compensate for the adverse effects of poverty. Since 1965, the federal Head Start program has helped low-income children expand their abilities to think, reason, and speak clearly, thus providing the children with more confidence, self-respect, and abilities to compete in later education and work environments.{2} Over the past two decades, this prevention program has resulted in long-term measurable positive effects on children's achievement and adjustment.

However, Head Start's proven success has not resulted in increased funding and availability. Now, with the current budget crises on both the national and state levels, the prospects for a governmental commitment to prevention seem less of a reality. This is unfortunate, especially in the wake of research indicating a clear need to place greater emphasis on preventing problems among young infants and children. According to the Committee for Economic Development, a group of concerned businessmen, "...If the nation defers the expense of preventive programs during the formative years, it will incur much higher and more intractable costs for older children who have already experienced failure."{3}

It costs less than $39,000 to provide one child with a continuum of preventive services beginning with prenatal and preventive health care and continuing with Head Start, Chapter I Compensatory Education, summer jobs for high school students, and four years of college paid at public expense.{4} It costs about $25,000 per year to keep one juvenile delinquent in a Texas training school.{5}

Obviously, the cost-effectiveness of prevention far outweighs remedial interventions. When the contribution an

effectively functioning member of society can make is factored in together with the amount such a person pays in taxes, the cost-effectiveness of prevention grows even larger.

Unfortunately, Texas society today is still struggling with many of the same problems it was facing a decade ago: unemployment, insufficient parenting skills and parenting education, increased numbers of working mothers with a need for quality child care, rising statistics on child abuse and neglect, increasing incidence of alcohol and drug abuse among children, rising numbers of juvenile delinquents, inadequate prenatal and perinatal health care, and continuing numbers of teenage pregnancies and school dropouts.

Many of these problems are documented in this book, which compiles facts gathered from federal and state government reports, national foundations, unpublished research, local area needs assessments, population databases, independent research, newspaper articles, published journals, and correspondence with experts from various fields. However, this book is not a complete and thorough description of the current status of Texas children. A lot of data are simply not available, like current figures on latchkey children or the number of children who abuse alcohol and drugs. The statistics used are the best estimates at hand and are taken from the most recent year for which they are available. Of course, the data can be interpreted different ways by different agencies or individuals.

The circumstances surrounding poor, disadvantaged children between the ages of birth and 12 years are particularly highlighted here. Not covered are facts about adolescents and young adults, unless the facts relate to young juvenile offenders

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and to the health and development of teenage mothers and their children.

The book is divided into eight sections corresponding to the major areas that have an effect on the growth and development of the child: "A Texas Profile" gives overall changes in the state's population, economy and workforce; "Families in Poverty" chronicles the problems of poverty and the growing underclass; "Services" indicates service areas that need to be improved in order to address the needs of poor children and their families; "Health" refers to the child's growth and development; "Education" addresses a child's future opportunities; "Abused and Troubled Children" refers to troubled families, runaways, and victims of abuse; "Child Care" targets the working mother and the unattended child; and "Toward Prevention" points to programs and services that can critically improve the lives of many Texas children while reducing the need for costly expenditures in later years.

A TEXAS PROFILE

What will Texas be like in the year 2010? The majority of the population will most likely be Hispanic, between the ages of 25 and 44, and living in single-parent households.{6} Most jobs will be information- or service-oriented rather than goods-producing. And, more women of childbearing age will be working than are currently employed.{1} Thus, there will be an increased need to manage the relationship between work and family life.

Texas will be the second most populous state in the nation, with well over 20 million residents, second only to California. Compared to an 11 percent growth rate for the nation, projections for Texas forecast an increase of almost 20 percent between now and the turn of the century. Of course, the state's future growth rate and total population will depend on its economic recovery, and the future remains clouded for predicting the job market, our state's crime rate, or a family's average annual income.

By 2000 there will be close to five million children 12 years of age and younger. During their lifetimes, many of these children will be faced with one or more of the following problems: poverty; a broken home; the risk of dropping out of school; growing up with inadequate food, health, and child care; lack of shelter; poor school preparedness; physical abuse; a diagnosable mental disorder; and emotional abuse and/or neglect.

The global and national concerns facing present-day society--problems related to the economic deficit, immigration, fiscal responsibility, a growing aged and retired population, and America's leadership in the free world--provide the milieu within which these children will come of age.

Since 1981, Texas has lost nearly a quarter million jobs in mining and manufacturing, due primarily to the beleaguered energy industry. Before the discovery of oil, Texas was a rural state. It was little more than 50 years ago that oil began to lure Texans out of the countryside and into the cities. Oil attracted outsiders into the state as well, and by the mid-1960s the majority of the state's population lived in urban settings. It was oil and gas taxes that provided the public funds which paid for our highway system and public services. Oil brought wealth to Texas. This wealth was short-lived, however, and by the mid-1980s the Texas economy was particularly hard hit by the decline in oil prices.{7}

The problems of the oil industry, coupled with the rising cost of living, the devaluation of the Mexican peso, and the stock market crisis of 1987, have all led to a depressed state economy. In 1986, unemployment rates in Texas exceeded ten percent, and double-digit unemployment has remained in several areas of the state.{7} On the whole, Texas communities bordering Mexico are experiencing higher rates of poverty and unemployment than the rest of the state.{1}

Because of the downturn in the Texas economy, many low-income families are destitute and homeless. These may be single-parent or two-parent families, and they may be from suburban as well as inner-city settings. Many of the families become homeless because of a precipitating crisis such as a drastic rent increase, the birth of a new child, the loss of a job, or separation from the principal wage earner. All across the state social service agencies are reporting a dramatic increase in homeless families. Due to cutbacks in

unemployment assistance at the federal level, reduced availability of low-cost housing, and tighter restrictions on program eligibility for housing assistance, these agencies are also reporting a decreased ability to provide assistance to the homeless.{1}

While in the coming years the Texas economy is expected to grow more slowly than it did in the 1970s and early 1980s, by the turn of the century it is expected to surpass the annual growth rate projected for the U.S. economy.{8} Rather than depending on one industry, the Texas economy will be characterized by a diversification of industries. Policymakers are looking to change tax structures in order to provide more equitable revenues for future human needs. If these changes occur, by 2010 more low-income and poor Texas families may have access to quality child care, compensatory education, and health-care coverage than current families in need. However, if the overall economy does not improve, what will be the source of these funds? Clear indications of the Texas of tomorrow may be seen in today's population growth, ethnic composition, unemployment, family size and structure, and crime rate.

15

1

Texas' population is growing at twice the national average.

Between 1980 and 1986, Texas' numerical increase in population exceeded that in any other state except California. This rapid growth was largely due to a net increase in in-migration from other states and a dramatic increase in international migration. In 1981-82, the annual rate of in-migration from other states was 2.9 percent of the Texas population, a significant increase over the annual rate of 1.6 in the 1970s. Also, the excess of births over deaths has remained steady, ranging from 1 percent to 1.5 percent throughout the 80s.{7}

Between 1970 and 1980, immigration by foreign-born persons rose dramatically. In 1980, the Census Bureau reported 856,213 foreign-born Texans, more than half of whom arrived in Texas after 1970. Over two-thirds of these immigrants were from Latin America, 22 percent from Asia, and 8 percent from Europe and Canada.{6}

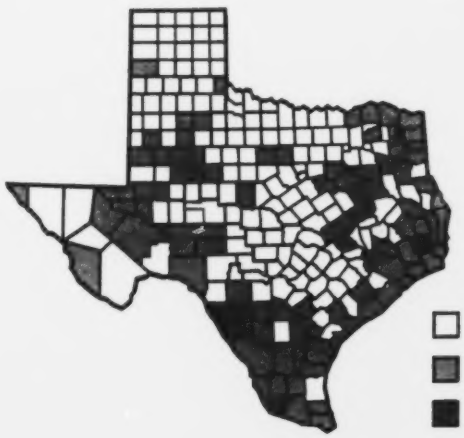
2

The annual average unemployment rate in Texas has exceeded the national average for the first time ever.

A new group of unemployed persons has emerged: the "new poor"--individuals who have been taxpayers and contributing citizens in the past, but who have found themselves out of work because of the declining state economy. Since their net worth is higher than the maximum level to qualify for aid, the new poor typically are ineligible for financial assistance.{9}

In mid-1987 in the Gulf Coast area and the lower Rio Grande Valley, unemployment rates moved into the double-digit figures.{7}

The mining, manufacturing, and construction jobs were particularly hard hit by the oil price collapse. The most optimistic forecast predicts these jobs will account for only a quarter of the state's nonfarm growth between 1986 and 2000. Some forecasters predict they will account for less than ten percent.{10}



UNEMPLOYMENT RATES
FOR TEXAS COUNTIES
1987

- STATE AVERAGE OR BELOW 9.6% -
- ABOVE STATE AVERAGE 9.7% TO 19.1%
- DOUBLE STATE AVERAGE 19.2% +

3

Hispanics are the fastest growing population in Texas.

In 1985, 3.7 million Hispanics lived in Texas. Given high immigration rates over the next several decades, Hispanics are expected to outnumber Anglos by the year 2025, with a population of 17.8 million compared to an Anglo population of 13.1 million. By some estimates, Hispanics will represent 36 percent of the Texas population by the year 2000 and 54 percent of the population by 2025.{6}

In the coming decades, the majority of the Texas Hispanic female population will be of childbearing age. According to the Texas Department of Health, between 1970 and 1984 the segment of Hispanic women in Texas who were 15 to 19 years old increased 84 percent. This dramatic rise was not seen in the *entire* Anglo 15- to 19-year-old population--which grew 9 percent--or the nonwhite population, whose numbers increased 22 percent.{11}

While this group includes Puerto Ricans, Guatemalans, South Americans and others, it is largely comprised of Mexican-origin Hispanics. More than 50 percent of these Mexican Americans live along the Gulf Coast and in South Central Texas.{12}

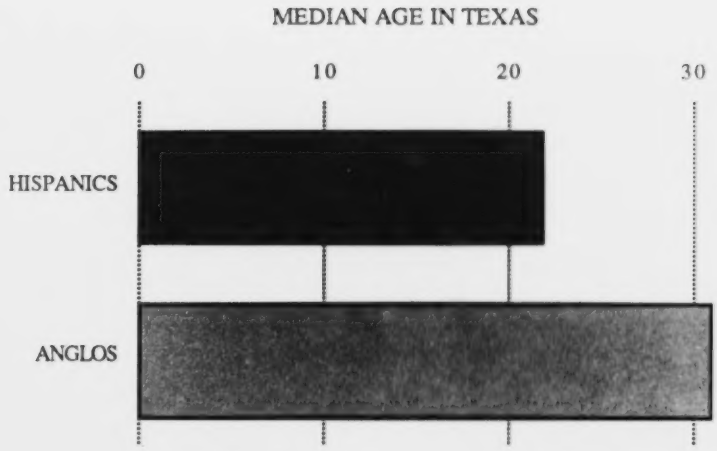
18

4

Hispanics represent Texas' youngest population, with a median age nine years younger than that of Anglos.

In 1980, the median age of Hispanics was 22, while Anglos' median was 31 years.{13} Overall, the medial age for Texans, 28.2 years, is slightly lower than the nation's 30 years.{6}

In general, the median age of the Texas population increased only 1.2 years from 1940 to 1980. In contrast, between 1985 and 2000, an increase of five years is estimated in the median age of Texans. The baby boom generation, persons born between 1946 and 1964, makes up one-third of the Texas population.{7}



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5

The average size of an Hispanic family in Texas is 4.2 persons, compared to 3.3 for the average Texas family.{13}

The average size of all Texas households during the first half of the 1980s was 3.33 persons, a number slightly higher than the nation's 3.27 persons. In addition, the percent of female-headed households is higher than that of the nation as a whole.{6}

The fertility rate for Texas Hispanic women 15 to 44 years is 53 percent higher than the rate for Anglo women and 5 percent higher than the rate for black women. The Mexican American within the Hispanic population has an even higher fertility rate--48 percent higher than the rate of all other Hispanic women. This high rate is reflected in the Hispanic family size.{12}

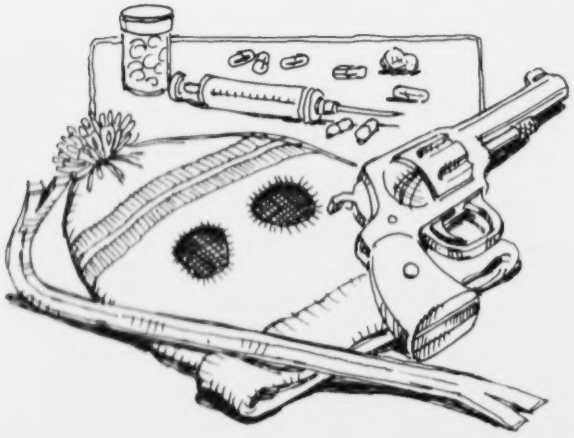
6

The crime rate leapt almost 15 percent in 1986, one of the highest one-year increases in a decade.

Texas ranks second only to Florida in criminal offenses per 100,000 population.{14}

In 1986, Terrell County in Big Bend was the only county in the state not to register a single index crime.* But this was the exception. Since the early 1970s, the state's crime rate has moved steadily upward, reflecting a significant loss in property, rise in personal injury, and loss of lives. Potter County in the Panhandle had the highest crime rate in 1986, followed by two urban counties, Dallas and Tarrant.{7}

*Index crimes include murder, rape, aggravated assault, armed robbery, burglary, theft, and motor vehicle theft.



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FAMILIES IN POVERTY

In 1980, the proportion of Texas families living in poverty was 11.1 percent, compared to 9.6 percent for the nation.{6} Texas children comprise almost 30 percent of the state's population, and 24 percent of these children live in poverty. Minorities are overrepresented: almost half of the poor children in Texas are Hispanic, and 42 percent are black. Over three-fourths of these children live in female-headed families where the mother is under age 25.

Poverty affects almost every aspect of a child's life. Children born in poverty have a shorter life expectancy than nonpoverty children; they are likely to be malnourished and uninsured; and many are homeless. Poor children are only half as likely to finish high school as other children; they have one-third the chance of entering a profession and twice the chance of being unemployed. If employed, their earnings are half as much as those who come from families with higher incomes.{15}

Why are there so many poor people in such a seemingly affluent society? For one, the difference in income between economic groups is at an unprecedented high. In 1986, the income gap between the rich and the poor reached its widest point in 40 years. The poorest 40 percent of American families received only 15 percent of the national income, the lowest percentage ever recorded. On the other hand, the wealthiest 20 percent of American families received nearly half of the national income, the highest proportion ever. The number of people who can be said to comprise America's great middle class has declined. This erosion of the middle class is due, in part, to lower paying jobs for working women and young people and a rise in divorce rates, with subsequent

poverty for some single-parent households.{16}

Moreover, those families living below the poverty line are becoming poorer. Between 1982 and 1986, the average amount of income which would qualify a poor family of four for the federal poverty level rose 13.6 percent, from $9,862 to $11,203.{14} Between 1982 and 1986, the income deficits for single-parent families, mostly headed by women, were 15 percent higher than for poor families in general.{16}

Further, children born to young parents are more likely to be poor. The poverty rate for families with household heads under age 25 has almost doubled, rising from 26 percent in 1973 to nearly 48 percent in 1985.{16} In 1985, 308,027 babies were born in Texas; over 15 percent were to teen mothers.{17} Children born to these younger parents are particularly subject to poverty and health complications, since these mothers are not likely to be employed or to receive prenatal care.

If the teen mother remains unmarried and unemployed, she will likely become dependent on public assistance. During 1984 and 1985, nearly 52 percent of the children participating in Texas Aid to Families with Dependent Children (AFDC) programs were born to single mothers. Forty percent of those births were to unmarried teenagers. On a monthly average, 9,200 teenage mothers were receiving AFDC in 1986. Some of these mothers were as young as 13.{18}

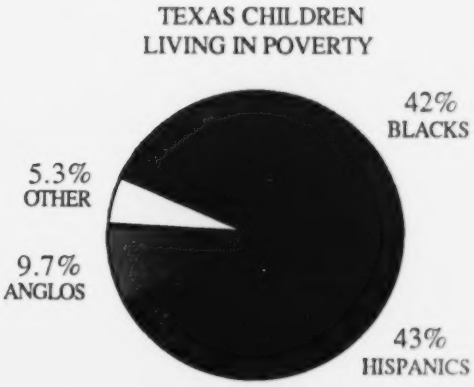
These statistics are alarming since the home environment is where children receive preparation for learning and socialization. The skills they develop there later enable them to compete in school and in the work force and to become a part of

the larger community. Without this basic preparation in the home, children are vulnerable to a number of setbacks, any one of which may limit their future opportunities as adults.

7

One in four Texas children--1.2 million--lives in poverty.

Between 1980 and 1985, the Texas population as a whole increased 14 percent, while the numbers of individuals living in poverty increased nearly 50 percent.{19} Hispanics suffered the highest poverty rate increases--32 percent--compared to 14 percent for blacks and 8.6 percent for Anglos. By 1987, one out of three Hispanics and blacks lived in poverty, compared to one out of ten Anglos.{20}



8

In a five-year period, the number of two-parent Texas families with children under 18 living in poverty increased 62 percent.{20}

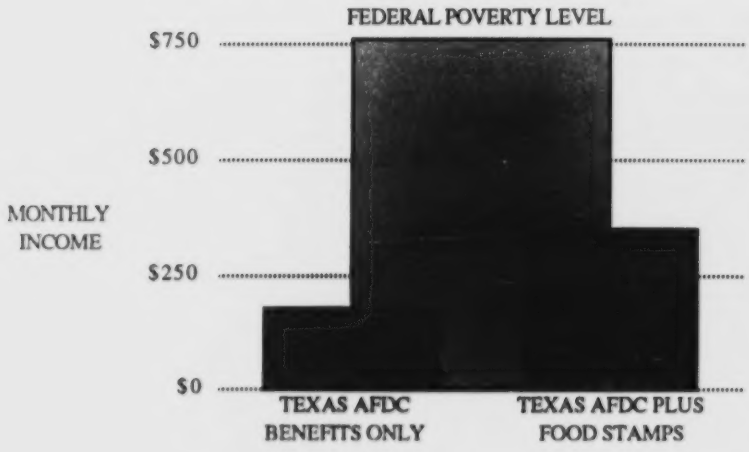
Between 1980 and 1985, the number of single-parent Texas families with children under 18 living in poverty increased 28 percent. Even though a greater proportion of single-parent families live in poverty (42%), the number of two-parent families living in poverty was larger--250,000 compared to roughly 203,000 in 1985.{20}

About 95 percent of the two-parent poor families had an employed parent, making them ineligible for AFDC assistance. In comparison, almost 70 percent of all single-parent family heads were employed.{21} In 1985, the median annual income of female-headed households was $13,690 compared to $26,500 for all Texas families.{22} Due to increases in the cost of living, parents working at minimum wage struggle to keep their families out of poverty.{20}

9

Texas AFDC monthly support for a family of three is $184, or 75 percent below the defined federal poverty level.{4}

In other words, an AFDC eligible Texas family of three with no income will receive less than one-fourth of the amount defined by the federal government as poverty level income. Even if the family receives food stamps, their monthly income remains less than half the federally-defined poverty level.{4}



10

Over half of all poor Texas children under 18 have no health insurance.{1}

Children are the largest uninsured age group in Texas, and Hispanics are the largest uninsured ethnic group. Fifty-three percent of all poor children 17 years of age and younger have no health insurance, and 55 percent of all poor Hispanics are uninsured.{1} Children without health insurance receive 40 percent less physician care and half as much hospital care as insured children.{16}

The service industry--which is least likely to provide sick leave, health insurance, and vacation benefits--employs half of Texas' working women who live at or below the poverty level. Most of these women are in part-time jobs. According to the United Way of Texas, over 55 percent of part-time employees are poor and without health insurance, compared to nearly 40 percent of full-time employees.{1}

Part-time employment, which is on the rise in Texas, does not require employers to provide benefits to employees.

11

Almost two-thirds of the household heads in the state who receive AFDC have not earned a high school diploma.{23}

Illiteracy, poor academic skills, limited English proficiency, and other education-related problems are the primary causes of poverty and dependency. The Educational Testing Service found that the majority of adults receiving AFDC benefits in 1983 had reading and math skills below the eighth- or ninth-grade level.{2}.

12

Nearly 50,000 Texas families experienced a divorce in 1986.{24}

Forty-eight percent of these families had one child; 36 percent had two children; and 16 percent had three or more children.{24} In the past eight years, divorced, single-parent, and separated families have experienced dramatic reductions in their annual income, forcing some divorced families into poverty.{8}

Thirty percent of the current generation of American children will experience a parental divorce before they are 18 years old. Between 1970 and 1982, the number of children in the nation that lived with a divorced mother rose 122 percent, to 5.1 million children.{25}

Compared to Anglo families in the United States, twice as many black children experience separation from a parent because of divorce or spousal separation. In 1982, only 42.4 percent of black children lived with their biological or adoptive parents or with a stepparent. On the other hand, 80.8 percent of Anglo children lived with such parents.{26}

13

Of those filing with the state to collect child support, only seven percent received payment.{4}

Thirty-eight states have higher collection rates than Texas.{4}

Many of the problems in child support collection stem from the failure of government to establish awards and collect payments from the absent fathers.

However, even when a poor female-headed family receives child support, the payment is usually not enough to lift the family out of poverty. The father is likely to be poor, also.

SERVICES

Texas ranks in the lowest ten percent for major social programs that serve children and their families: 44 states have higher Medicaid payments, 46 states spend more on mental health, and 47 states provide more money to poor families with dependent children.{1} For the past ten years Texas has not changed its ranking for AFDC and Medicaid coverage for families with no other source of income.

Over a billion dollars are spent each year in Texas on the care and safety of its poor, yet these dollars have not significantly affected the growing numbers of needy children. Why? One reason is that funding levels are not keeping pace with the growing numbers of poor Texas families. Another is that poor families often do not know where to go for help.

Obtaining public assistance is difficult, especially for the poor parent who does not speak the primary language or does not know how to read or use the telephone book. Recent immigrants from foreign countries, for example, may qualify for assistance but remain unaware of or confused about the types of services to which they are entitled. Because these families are underrepresented in public services, the numbers and needs of immigrant children are unknown. The number of refugees from Vietnam, Cambodia, Laos, and Ethiopia is fairly well documented, but the number from Mexico and Central America is not.{27} No one knows how many children in the latter group are in need. Currently, the Texas Department of Human Services operates a federally funded program that provides temporary financial, medical, and social services to eligible refugees, but the future of this program is unclear.

All Texas children needing health care and medical treatment should be allowed these services, not just those who can afford them. Currently, the mosaic of health programs that exists is not adequate to reach even half of the uninsured Texas families and their children. Approximately 435,000 Texas families received food stamps between 1982 and 1986, yet this represents less than half the number of families in need of such services.{21}

If the needs of poor children are not addressed early in life, Texas' public service system then moves to the more costly task of remediation. Unfortunately, many children growing up in impoverished homes will later drop out of school or turn to crime to support themselves. The Texas juvenile justice system is witnessing an increase in crimes committed by young children, and it lacks sufficient staff and facilities to work with and house these children. Over half of the juveniles held in detention centers in 1986 were released in less than a day; seven percent, however, were held in secure detention centers because there were no alternative nonsecure settings available at intake.{28} While the majority of these incarcerations were not for serious crimes, they signal distresses in the children's lives.

Distress may be a result of family disruption. Sometimes families are unfit to care for their children. When a child's health and safety are threatened, Child Protective Services can temporarily place the child in foster care. While the number of investigated reports on child abuse has risen in the past ten years, there has been a 31 percent decline in the number of Texas children in foster care.{29} This reduction is primarily due to a systemwide policy to prevent unnecessary foster care placements.

However, this policy mandate comes at a time when the foster care system faces even greater problems than it did ten years ago: increasing homelessness among Texas families, a growing use of crack and other drugs which result in newborns with medical and developmental problems, and the spread of AIDS among children and adolescents. AIDS children and their families require intensive supports as well as alternative placements when the illness becomes severe.{2}

Remedial services such as juvenile probation and protective services intervene in a situation after abuse, neglect, or family disruption has become evident. While these programs are helpful and may have later benefits as well as immediate ones, it is early intervention programs such as Head Start and Women, Infants and Children (WIC) which can significantly affect the growth and development of all children, especially minority and disadvantaged children.

A telephone survey in 1986, conducted by the Lyndon Baines Johnson School of Public Affairs and The University of Texas at Austin School of Social Work, indicated that Texans strongly favor a range of public services for children and their families and that these citizens are willing to pay higher taxes in order to develop and improve such services.{30}

Nevertheless, in the past decade the state has decreased its investment in health and human service programs, from 18 percent of the total state budget in 1977 to 14 percent in 1987.{1} The reduction in public services has contributed to the state's poor return rate on its federal tax dollar. For every $1.59 paid by Texans to the federal government, Texas receives only $1 in return. By contrast, New York receives

$1 for every 75 cents paid by its citizens.{1}

Therefore, the public policy choice facing Texas is not whether to increase funding levels, but when and how. Greater support for prevention programs is one way the state can enable disadvantaged families to provide better care for their children.

14

Texas mental health services for children and adolescents are deficient in some areas of the state and nonexistent in others.{31}

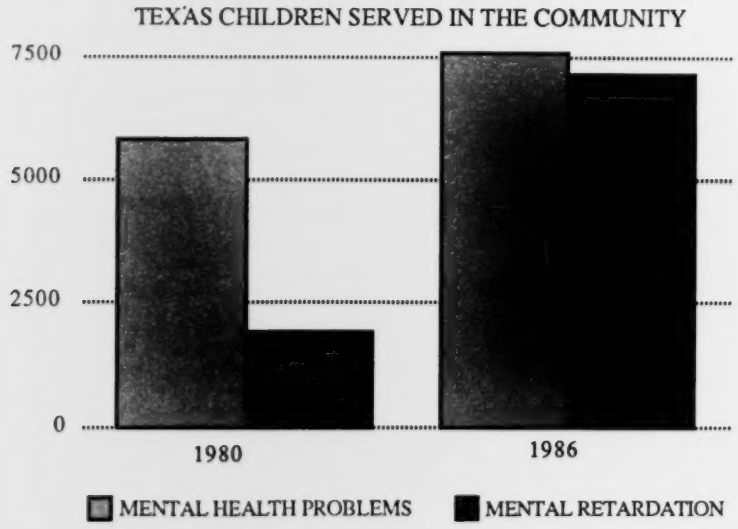
In 1988, the Texas Department of Mental Health and Mental Retardation estimated that a quarter-million Texas children under 18 had a severe mental problem requiring professional treatment. Over 150,800 of these children were to be served by private mental health facilities and 100,534 by the public sector. Both of these figures were expected to increase six percent by 1993.{31}

However, the public mental health system is serving only 20 percent of this population.{31} Even fewer children under 13 years of age are served as inpatients in the public mental health system. For instance, about 200 children 12 years of age and younger were inpatients in Texas state hospitals in 1986.{32} Seventy-one percent were Anglo and 22 percent were black, while only 7 percent were Hispanic.{32} Sixty-four percent of these children were diagnosed with a developmental disorder, while less than one percent were diagnosed with schizophrenia and even fewer with autism. Twelve percent were diagnosed with depressive disorders or life adjustment problems.{32}

15

In 1986, 14,654 Texas children under the age of 13 were served by community mental health/mental retardation centers; almost twice as many as were served in 1980.

In 1986 in community centers, 7,101 children age 12 and under were being served for mental retardation, 7,372 served for mental health problems, and 181 for alcohol and drug abuse problems.{32}



16

In one year, a foster care child is placed in three or four different homes.{33}

In four years, the average number of foster care placements per child rose about 15 percent, from 3.2 placements in 1984{34} to 3.7 placements in 1988.{33} Being removed from the original home is a traumatic experience for any child, much less being removed from two, three, and perhaps four homes in one year.

As of April 1988, Texas Department of Human Service foster care reimbursement for basic-level room and board increased to a flat rate of $11 per day.{35} However, actual cost of caring for a foster child is much higher. Usually, the foster family pays $2 or $3 a day out of its own pocket. According to the Children's Defense Fund, in 1986 the moderate-level cost of rearing a child age 12 in the urban South was about $505 a month.{2}

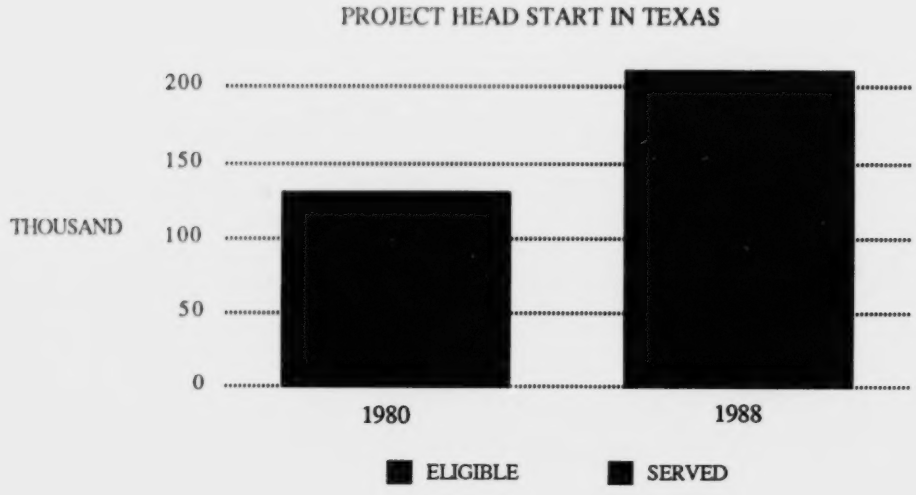
In 1987, over half of the children in foster care received payments from Title 4E Foster Care, a federally matched foster care assistance program for children who meet the categorical requirements for the Texas Department of Human Services' AFDC program. Nearly 45 percent of the children received state-paid foster care assistance, a payment program that was implemented in 1979 to alleviate the counties' financial responsibility for foster care.{36}

In 1986, nearly half of the children in foster care were Anglo, 25 percent were black and 20 percent were Hispanic.{29}

17

Only ten percent of the eligible three-, four-, and five-year-olds in Texas were enrolled in Head Start in 1988.

In 1980, 130,557 three-, four-, and five-year-olds were eligible for Head Start in Texas.{37} In 1988, this figure jumped to an estimated 211,000, a 62 percent increase in eight years.{38} While the number of eligible children has increased dramatically, the percentage of eligible children served has increased only four percent between 1980 and 1988.{39}



18

Texas has not elected to make cash payments to single women during pregnancy.

...unless they have children who are eligible for AFDC benefits.{40}

Through the Indigent Health Care and Treatment Act passed in the 69th Texas legislative session (1985), the state extended Medicaid coverage to poor Texas children and pregnant women who are not eligible for AFDC benefits.{21} This program, however, is restricted since income limits are derived from AFDC eligibility criteria.

Effective 1988, Congress passed a law allowing states to extend Medicaid coverage to all pregnant women and to infants under one year of age whose mothers have incomes up to 185 percent of the federal poverty level.{41} Texas currently qualifies less than 100 percent.

19

Inhalant abuse accounts for 87 percent of cases involving Texas Hispanic juveniles treated by publicly funded drug abuse clinics.

For every single inhalant sniffer given treatment in Texas, four to five abusers escape identification. Often, children are introduced to inhalant sniffing at 11 or 12 years of age. In 1983, 85,000 sniffers were identified in El Paso, Houston, Eagle Pass, Austin, Del Rio, and the South Texas area. The average age of the inhalant abuser is 13 or 14 years.{42}

20

In one year, Early and Periodic Screening, Diagnosis and Treatment (EPSDT) expenditures decreased by 11 percent.

...from over $17 million in 1986 to less than $15 million in 1987.{43} Inadequate funding for the projected eligible population resulted in coverage for fewer clients than had been predicted by the Texas Department of Human Services.{36}

Early and Periodic Screening, Diagnosis and Treatment (EPSDT) provides periodic medical and dental check-ups and follow-up treatment for Medicaid-eligible children. It is designed to link poor children to family doctors and dentists in their community.

Texas is not using its EPSDT program as a resource for emotionally disturbed children and adolescents. The state could use Medicaid dollars to pay for treatment of mental health problems identified in the EPSDT screening.{2}

21

In 1987, 61.2 percent of Texas women, infants and children eligible for WIC, the federal food program, did not receive these benefits.{4}

According to the state's WIC program, 1,123,012 women, infants, and children were eligible for WIC in 1987.{44} However, 35 percent more could be eligible. Texas has elected to limit eligibility to those women, infants, and children who have incomes at or below 150 percent of poverty level.{17} Most states have elected to go with the higher federal eligibility cutoff--up to 185 percent of the poverty level.{2}

Evaluations of WIC programs have found that participation is not only cost effective but also health effective, reducing the incidence of anemia among infants and young children and the incidence of premature births, low birthweight, and neonatal and infant mortality.{3}

HEALTH

For every 1,000 Texas babies born, almost ten will die before their first birthdays. At a time when babies are routinely saved through highly sophisticated medical technologies, it is surprising to find so many deaths, particularly after the first four weeks of life. Apparently newborns are being saved in our state's hospitals but upon returning home, many of them face inadequate shelter, nutrition, and health care. Most of their tragic deaths could be avoided.

Many babies at risk are born to teenage mothers. These "children of children" are much more likely to die during the perinatal period or to be born with low birthweight (LBW), congenital defects, and a number of mental disorders than are the children of mothers over the age of 20. They are likely to be conceived out-of-wedlock to mothers who are poor, unemployed, and too immature to shoulder the responsibilities of parenthood.

Unfavorable births are closely related to the health status of the mother and the availability of health care during the pre- and perinatal periods. Prenatal care is critical in preventing low birthweight. Children are labeled low in birthweight if they weigh five and one-half pounds or less at birth, following a normal 40-week gestation period for the mother. Any premature baby--a baby born before 40 weeks--will usually not live if it weighs less than three and one-third pounds. Low birthweight infants are more likely to die during their first month of life than infants of normal weight. In fact, half of all infant deaths in the first year of life are attributable to LBW. In Texas in the past ten years, the proportion of very low birthweight infants has risen for both white and black babies.{45} Concomitantly, the state's

prenatal care record has not improved over the past ten years.

Infant health problems also occur when the mother is an alcoholic or a drug abuser or has other health problems such as AIDS. Chronic alcohol consumption during pregnancy, for example, usually results in fetal alcohol syndrome, a condition that occurs in almost one percent of all live births. The psychoneurological effects of fetal alcohol syndrome may be devastating. These children are left with IQs too high to qualify for remedial services yet too low to secure and retain gainful employment.

If high-risk children survive infancy, then their problems are likely to be compounded. Children from poor families rate high in educational failure because they are likely to lag behind their peers in physical and psychological development. For some, the developmental lags begin before birth and become increasingly more prominent during the infant and toddler years. The result is children who are socially isolated and have difficulty relating to others. They are "at risk" of running away, dropping out of school, abusing drugs, committing crimes, and possibly committing suicide--behaviors far more costly to Texas society than state dollars applied to prevention would be.

Not only do these children become social risks but they become medical risks as well. Unintentional injuries such as drownings, poisonings, burns, bicycle and pedestrian injuries, and motor vehicle accidents are more likely to occur among children of low-income families than those from families with adequate or above-average incomes.{46} Low-income families may be unable to purchase safety devices, such as infant car seats, that would likely prevent serious injury or death from

home or car accidents. In addition, most of these families are without health care coverage and cannot afford regular medical check-ups, prenatal care, immunizations, or treatment for new or pre-existing conditions.{2} Over the past 15 years, the number of preschoolers receiving DPT shots--vaccinations against diphtheria, tetanus, and whooping cough--declined by ten percent, and, according to a study for the Urban Institute, there was a dramatic increase in reports of malnutrition and use of hospital emergency rooms among these children.{47} Between 1980 and 1985, immunizations against preventable diseases declined by almost six percent for rubella and two percent for mumps. Polio immunization declined by 3.3 percent.{2}

It is true that today's improvements in infectious disease control, sanitation, housing and medical care have positively affected the health of children. While this trend demonstrates a steady reduction in morbidity and mortality, birth defects and chronic illnesses persist. According to the American Medical Association, as many as ten percent of all teenagers have some chronic condition--cerebral palsy, cardiac disorders, seizures, asthma, diabetes, or orthopedic disorders. The effects of many of these chronically disabling conditions depend on the developmental stage at which they first occur.{48} The earlier these illnesses occur in a child's development, the more potentially disabling they will be, another reason for addressing the health of young children.

Even though the federally funded public health services such as Medicaid, immunization grants, community and migrant health centers, and the Title V maternal and child health block grant have played a major role in helping low-income

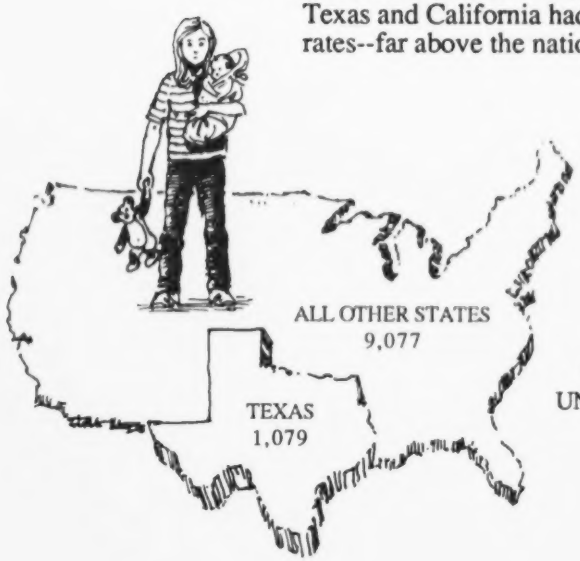
families and children, these programs are hindered by limited funding and, at times, arbitrary eligibility rules.{2} Goals for the improvement of child health might include expanding Medicaid coverage to all poor pregnant women and children, establishing public health insurance coverage for eligible families, providing migrant health centers throughout the state, and obtaining sufficient funds to serve every eligible woman and child needing food supplements.

22

Of all the states, Texas has the highest number of births to women under 15 years of age.{49}

In 1986, 1,131 babies were born to Texas girls under 15. This is nearly a four percent increase from 1984 totals when 1,088 babies were born to this population.{50} In 1984, over 445 of these babies were born to Hispanic adolescents and 400 were born to blacks from this age group.{12} In 1986, 458 babies were born to black girls under 15, representing a 15 percent increase over 1984 figures.{24}

In 1985, California, Texas, New York, Florida, Illinois, Ohio, Pennsylvania, Georgia, and Michigan accounted for 50 percent of all of the births to teenagers in the United States. Among these states, Texas and California had the highest birth rates--far above the national average.{49}



BIRTHS TO GIRLS
UNDER 15 YEARS OLD
1985

23

More than a quarter of all Texas girls under 19 who gave birth in 1985 already had one or more children.

Texas teenagers had over 47,000 babies in 1985. For nearly 10,000 of these teenagers, this birth was their second; it was the third for 1,970 and the fourth or fifth for 327. For some, this baby was the sixth, seventh, eighth or even ninth child.{51}

Although Texas teenage fertility rates have declined over the past 15 years, following the national teenage fertility patterns, they remain among the highest in the nation.{52}

Thirty percent of all live births in Texas in 1984 were to Hispanics and 20 percent of these Hispanic births were to teenagers.{12}

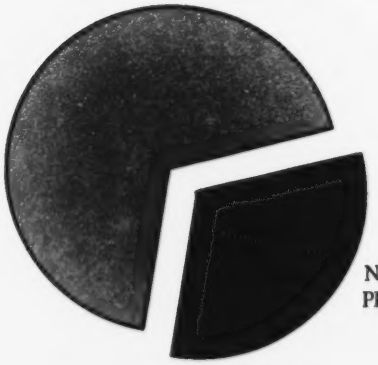
24

In 1985, over 32 percent of Texas babies were born to women who did not receive early prenatal care.{4}

Babies born to women who have received no prenatal care are three times more likely to die in infancy than babies born to women who have had prenatal care. Only two areas--Washington, D.C. and New Mexico--ranked higher than Texas in number of women who received either late prenatal care or no prenatal care. At the current rate of progress, Texas will not meet the Surgeon General's 1990 objective for early prenatal care.{52}

At least 60 percent of congenital syphilis cases could be prevented if early, high-quality prenatal care, serologic testing in both the first and third trimester, and adequate follow-up were carried out. In 1985, Texas led the nation in the number of congenital syphilis cases reported.{53}

BABIES BORN IN TEXAS
1985



25

Three to four percent of all newborns in Texas will have a significant birth defect and/or mental retardation.{54}

At a minimum, all of these disabled children will require special education, social services, and frequent monetary assistance. At a conservative annual rate of $10,000 for care, the medical costs will be over 90 million dollars for each year's group of affected babies.{54}

26

The proportion of low birthweight Texas babies in 1986 was 6.8 percent of all live births.{17}

A total of 307,003 Texas babies were born in 1986, and nearly 20,876 were born weighing less than five and one-half pounds.{17}

Babies born to teenagers are nearly three times more likely to be low in birthweight than infants born to mothers in their 20s or 30s.{49} Low birthweight rates for nonwhite teenage mothers are much greater than the rates for all white mothers.{52} However, for both whites and blacks, there were more low birthweight infants in 1984 than 1978. These infants are nearly 40 times more likely to die in the first month of life and three times more likely to have neurodevelopmental handicaps and congenital anomalies than normal infants.{49}

TEXAS BABIES
1986

HEALTHY
286,127

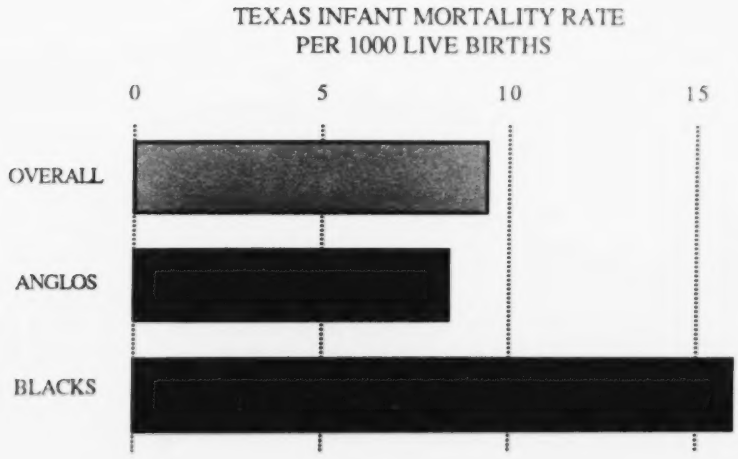
LOW BIRTH WEIGHT
20,876

27

In 1986 the infant mortality rate for Texas blacks was 16 per 1000 live births.{24}

In comparison, the infant mortality rate for Anglos was 8.5 and the overall rate was 9.5.{24} Since 1985, the infant mortality rate for Anglos has decreased 1.3 percent while black infant mortality has risen .5 percent.{4}

Deaths of infants under 28 days occur almost twice as often for Texas blacks as for Texas Anglos, 10 per 1000 live births compared to 5.3 per 1000 live births.{24}



28

Accidents are the leading cause of death for Texas children under 15 years of age.{24}

Motor vehicles are the primary cause of accidental death for these children. In 1986, 34.5 percent of the deaths in Texas of children under age five were due to motor vehicle accidents, and more than half of all accidental deaths among the five- to fourteen-year age group were caused by motor vehicles.{24}

Not only are accidents the number one killer among children between one and fourteen years of age, but nonfatal injuries account for thousands of childhood disabilities and cost an estimated $3.2 billion a year in hospital bills.{46} Accidental injuries are not random events. Many of them can be prevented if at-risk children are identified and injury prevention is taught.{46}

29

One percent of the total number of AIDS cases in Texas are children.

Of this one percent, 47 percent contracted AIDS through blood transfusions required by illness and injury; 37 percent had an at-risk parent or a parent with AIDS/HIV+; 11 percent were hemophiliacs; and 5 percent acquired the disease from unknown sources. Of these pediatric cases, 41 percent were white, 32 percent were black, and 27 percent were Hispanic. There were no reported cases in the Oriental or Asian groups.{55}

Blacks and Hispanics are overrepresented in number of pediatric AIDS cases in the United States. Blacks represent only 12 percent of the total U.S. population, yet they account for 54 percent of pediatric AIDS cases. Hispanics, representing about four percent of the total population, account for 24 percent of the pediatric AIDS.{56}

HIV-positive children are being denied access to schools, and some dentists, physicians, and health care providers are refusing to treat AIDS-infected patients. There are lawsuits in which AIDS, or fear of AIDS, is cited in determining child visitation privileges to divorced fathers.{57}

30

Suicide is the third leading cause of death among Texas males 15 to 34 years old.{24}

For Texas females 15 to 34 years old, suicide is the fourth leading cause of death.{24}

Each day, 13 young people kill themselves in the United States. Even more attempt suicide and fail. Between one and ten percent of the youth who attempt suicide succeed, and many medical examiners believe that the reported number of suicides among young people may be less than one-half the actual number.{58}

The suicide rate among youths in the U.S. increased almost threefold from 1950 to 1984. In 1950, the rate was 4.5 per 100,000 youth 15 to 24 years old whereas by 1984 the rate had risen to 12 per 100,000 youth.{58}

EDUCATION

With a growing poor population, Texas faces an unprecedented challenge: educating the low-income child to compete in a knowledge-based society. To meet this challenge, the state recently inaugurated sweeping, long-range changes in its public school system. These changes were designed to improve the quality of the curriculum, to attract and retain good teachers, to ensure that schools are well managed and equitably financed, and to involve the parents and the community in the child's education.

The long-range effects of Texas' school reform are yet to be determined; but if the state is to remain competitive with other states and with the world, it will need additional reforms, such as tailoring educational requirements for the Hispanic and black populations, improving the curriculum in elementary and secondary schools, and increasing students' efficiency in the use of education and information resources.{6} In the coming years, the level of education will decide an individual's earning potential and mobility.{1}

The results of a good education are now seen not only as mastering a core curriculum of the basic skills--reading, writing, and computation--but also as developing skills necessary for lifelong learning. We cannot anticipate exactly what skills a rapidly changing technology will require of its work force in the future, but we do know that in the society of today and tomorrow, a good education will be crucial to securing employment.

It was not uncommon in years past for a person to move from an elementary education to an agricultural, blue-collar, or manufacturing job and maintain a family on the income. Now, however, many doors

are closed to a young person who fails to obtain a high school degree. In 1985, the Census Bureau reported that a man with a high school diploma earned about $5,000 more than a man without secondary education, and a woman with a high school diploma earned about $4,000 more than her less educated counterpart.{59}

Between 1984 and 2000, more than half of the new jobs in the nation will require some education beyond high school. Even less technical jobs, in the areas of marketing and sales, for instance, will require a solid foundation in reading, writing, speaking, and computation. Hispanics and blacks are more likely to suffer from the increased education requirements of the job market than Anglos. According to the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (EEO), both groups are 35 percent more likely than Anglos to be employed in jobs that are expected to disappear between now and the turn of the century.

Hispanic and black students are more likely than Anglos to be poor and begin their public school education at a disadvantage. The home is the first and most important environment for a child. Poor families have difficulties providing their children with the social, psychological, and developmental foundation needed to compete successfully with more advantaged youngsters. In fact, poor children are not likely to receive good nutrition, parental involvement and support, quality child care, appropriate medical care, or enriched learning experiences prior to their first year in school.

Head Start and other early education programs are an attempt to prepare these children for the school work ahead. Recent

studies have shown that disadvantaged children who have had the opportunity to attend Head Start or a comparable preschool program are more likely to complete high school and go on to a vocational or academic setting. They are less likely to receive public assistance, become teen parents, be unemployed, or be in trouble with the law than those disadvantaged children who do not attend Head Start.{60}

However, federally funded early intervention programs are not serving *all* eligible, low-income, disadvantaged children in Texas. The bilingual education program is not reaching enough non-English-speaking and limited-English-proficient students; and nationally almost half of the Chapter-1-eligible children are being denied these services. These limitations are largely due to restricted and meager funding levels. The result is a false economy, since helping poor children stay in school saves the state the cost of a child's repeating a grade--which is four times more expensive than Chapter 1 services.{2} According to the Committee for Economic Development, for every dollar invested in quality preschool education, a future saving of $4.75 is realized in lowered costs of special education, public assistance, and incarceration.{3}

Central to the success of these early intervention programs is a strong parental involvement component. A parent is a child's primary teacher. If the relationship between a parent and a child is a rich and rewarding one, then the child's competence and motivation to learn are maximized. Parental involvement seems to be increasing across the nation. Parent-Teacher Association (PTA)

membership is up one-third, and many of these new members are single parents. Yet, most school districts in Texas are without an organized school volunteer program.{23}

School resources vary widely from district to district and are highly correlated with community revenue. In 1987, the amount spent nationally on each public school student was $3,983.{61} In 1987, $3,316 was spent to educate one child in a Texas public school. The state paid $1,790 of this amount and the remainder--$1,526--was raised by local school boards.{62} Thirty-three states had a higher per pupil expenditure than Texas.{23} While the difference between state and national expenditures is only $667, each dollar spent on a student can greatly affect that student's success in school, later employability, and self-esteem.

All too often poor, minority children enter first grade at an inferior public school. According to Gary Orfield, a University of Chicago expert on desegregation, nearly two-thirds of our nation's black students attend predominantly minority schools, and the percentage of Hispanics attending minority schools actually *rose* from 54.8 percent in 1968 to 70.6 percent in 1984. In most cases minority schools are less well funded than majority schools.{3}

According to the Committee on Economic Development (CED), our school system was developed to meet the needs of "a newly industrialized nation." Schools were modeled after the factories in which the students were expected to work.{3} This factory-like environment is still maintained--large, vacant hallways, compartmentalized learning, and a staff that expects little from its students--giving both students and teachers few incentives to improve.

Without a sense of belonging and continuity, disadvantaged children will likely lose interest in school and school-related activities. Poor students are three times more likely to drop out of school than more affluent students. One reason: they need to earn money for themselves and many times for their families as well. Thirty-seven percent of the 9th grade class in Texas will not graduate.{63} Most of these children come from poor families. Poverty, not ethnicity, determines failure to graduate from high school. However, since minority students are more likely to be poor, these groups are overrepresented in the dropout population.

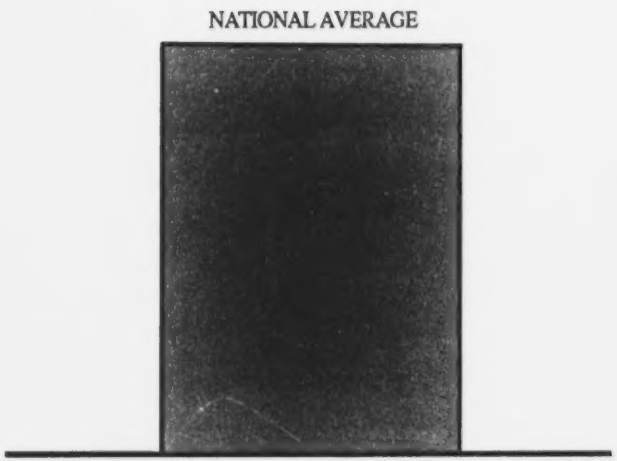
Dropping out of school not only affects the future employability of the student but also influences the long-term economic health of our state. At a Sesquicentennial forum of prominent Texas writers, educators, and political and business leaders, one theme resounded strongly and clearly: the state's economic and cultural advancement rests with the education of its children. All agreed that our state needs to develop its "human infrastructure" with policies that aim to produce a literate work force.{64}

31

Texas 11th graders score at or below the national average in writing and reading.

This average ranking refers to test objectives that 11th graders are required to meet in order to graduate from Texas high schools. In 1985, students scored slightly above the national average in math and below the national average in reading.{65}

If students are to compete for jobs in an information-based society, they will need adequate reading, math, and science skills. Texas students are particularly deficient in basic reading skills. In October 1985, 3rd, 7th, and 11th graders all performed below the national average on the reading portion of the Texas Assessment of Minimum Skills (TEAMS).{65}



32

In the next decade, Texas will face a teacher shortage in elementary and secondary schools.

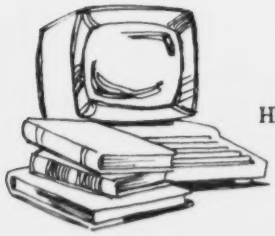
The impending shortage of teachers is primarily due to an increase in enrollment of children of the baby boom generation, a decrease in numbers of teachers being hired during the "baby bust" period of the 1960s and 1970s, and an increase in jobs outside of education that pay better for women and minorities.{6} Annually, more than 9,000 Texas teachers leave the educational work force because they seek higher salaries, more prestigious positions, and better working conditions.{23}

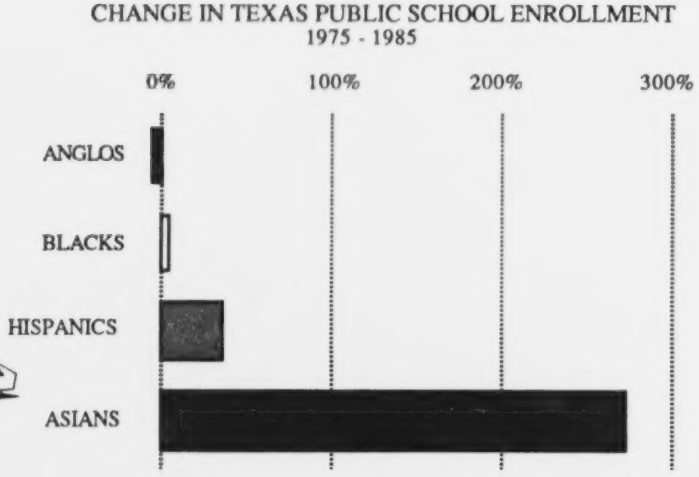
Currently, the yearly demand for teachers exceeds 20,000. Yet, the number of teacher certificates issued over the past eight years has declined in almost every teaching field--decreases of over 13 percent in elementary education and over 30 percent in secondary education.{23}

33

Between 1986 and 1990, Texas public school enrollment will increase more than eight percent.{23}

By 1990, Texas' projected school enrollment will be 3.5 million.{23} Between 1975 and 1985, Texas public school enrollment increased 10.9 percent. The Anglo student population declined over this decade while the Hispanic pupil numbers rose 36 percent and the black student population increased 5 percent. In this same time period, the proportional growth of Asian students was 275 percent, from 16,000 students in 1976 to 60,000 students in 1985. These ethnic shifts in the Texas school-age population are expected to increase in the future.{6}





34

In 1984, only 25 percent of all school districts had organized a school volunteer program.{23}

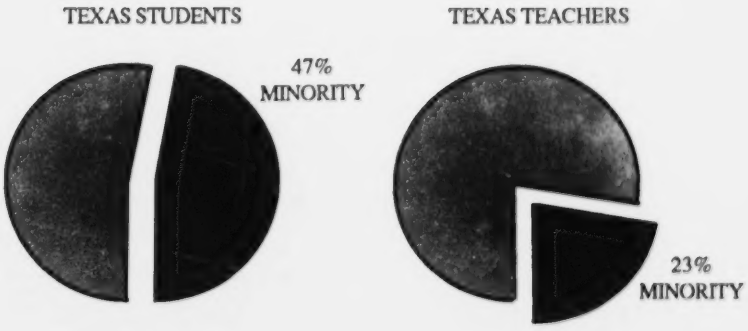
Parental involvement in Texas schools is limited in scope and content. Only 2,300 of the campuses in the state had developed some type of school-community partnership by 1984. The majority of these programs were in large school districts.

School districts with comprehensive parent involvement programs had students who showed the greatest improvements in reading skills.{66}

35

In Texas, minority representation in the student population is 47 percent, while that in the teaching force is 23 percent.{23}

Thirteen percent of the minority 23 percent of teachers are Hispanic.{6} By the year 2035, Hispanics will constitute the majority of student enrollment in Texas--from fewer than one million in 1985 to nearly 2.4 million in 2035. Already, the public school system is experiencing this ethnic shift in the elementary school grades.{6} The public school system may need bilingual teachers to communicate better with these students and to serve as role models.



36

Almost half of the students identified as emotionally disturbed drop out of school before their senior year.{67}

In addition, Texas has not established adequate supports for emotionally disturbed children who become too old to attend public school. Thus, there is no follow-up care for such children as they grow into young adulthood.

37

One out of every three Texas students does not graduate from high school.

In comparison, approximately 26 percent of high schoolers nationwide do not complete school.{63}

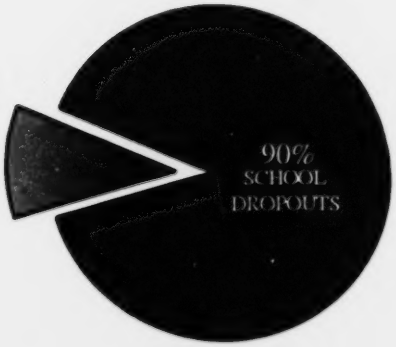
For each generation of dropouts in Texas, the cost to the state is more than $17 billion in (a) foregone income and lost tax revenues and (b) increased expenditures for welfare, incarceration, unemployment insurance and placement, and adult training and education.{68}

Attrition rates differ significantly for the three racial/ethnic groups. During the 1985-86 school year the rates were 27 percent for whites, 34 percent for blacks, and 45 percent for Hispanics.{63}

A person who leaves school before graduating earns approximately $150,000 less than a high school graduate over his or her lifetime.{23}

Ninety percent of Texas prison inmates are school dropouts.{69}

STATE PRISON POPULATION
1987



38

In 1986, only 12 percent of the school districts in Texas had a dropout prevention program.{63}

According to the State Board of Education's 1986-1990 long-range plan, the Texas Education Agency will investigate possible solutions to the dropout problem, seek funding for demonstration projects, and publicly recognize campuses that exhibit decreased dropout rates and decreased failure rates for disadvantaged students.

A goal has been set to lower the dropout rate to five percent by the school year 1997-98.{23} At the current rate of progress, Texas will not meet this objective.

ABUSED AND TROUBLED CHILDREN

Only ten years ago abused and troubled children were labeled "hidden children," living silently behind closed doors.{70} Today this is no longer the case. The plight of the troubled child has entered the consciousness of middle America. Society is confronted with frightening news headlines, photographs and descriptions of missing children stamped on milk cartons and placed in post offices, and made-for-television movies depicting mistreated children. The increased public awareness has brought about an increased reporting of abuse and an increased demand for protective services.

In 1986 alone, an estimated 419,000 Texas children were reported as being at risk of being abused, neglected or both.{29} Over 71,000 cases were investigated--61,156 of which were confirmed--which means 83 percent, or nearly 348,000 Texas children, were never brought to the attention of protective services. Neglect cases constituted 51 percent of the reports made to Texas Protective Services for Families and Children, including physical abuse cases estimated at 21 percent; sexual abuse, 11 percent; and emotional abuse, 13 percent.{29}

While child abuse is not restricted to any particular group, it is seen more frequently in families where parents are troubled by alcoholism, drug abuse, marital strife, low self-esteem, and joblessness. Given the significant number of Texas families living below the poverty level, the probability of child abuse and neglect is likely to increase over the next decade.{1} In 1986, more than 60 percent of the states reported to the House Select Committee on Children, Youth and Families that deteriorating economic conditions have greatly

contributed to the rise in child abuse and neglect over the past seven years.{2}

The decline in family earnings and across-the-board funding cuts in welfare, unemployment, and housing benefits have contributed greatly to the spread of hunger and homelessness among low-income Texas families. A poor family becomes a marginal family, socially isolated from the larger community. As this social isolation grows, it hinders a family's ability to solve life's problems, which may range from being unable to obtain adequate food, rest, and recreation to being unable to affirm one's sense of self-worth. These feelings can spill over to the children. Particularly in the case of immigrants, the failure to thrive successfully in their new country may result in bitterness and frustration, generating a context for abusive behavior.{71}

Child abuse is never found alone. Invariably, other family members are being emotionally or physically abused. In 1986, 8,496 Texas women and 12,636 Texas children were provided shelter from domestic violence and abuse.{29} While only 27 percent of the victims at Texas family violence shelters reported child abuse, it is estimated that 40 percent of the children of victims of spousal abuse are also abused.{2} Unfortunately, half of the abused Texas adults requesting services in 1986 were denied shelter because of a lack of space.{29}

Most abused children are of preschool age, a time in the life cycle when humans are by nature innocent, naive, and vulnerable to the external forces around them. The family of the 1980s is a patchwork of different combinations. For example, children may be living with their original parents, stepparents, grandparents,

grandparents and single parent, single mother and boyfriend, single father and girlfriend, single mother, or single father. In a troubled family setting, any one of these authority figures can be abusive or neglectful.

The stereotype of the child abuser is a male authority figure--the child's father, or stepfather, or the mother's boyfriend. However, in 1986 the alleged child abuser in Texas was more likely to be a white female, married, and, in 46 percent of the cases, the natural mother of the child. A smaller segment--about ten percent--of abusers are stepparents; however, there are indications that this number is increasing. Over 80 percent of the stepparent abusers are stepfathers.{29}

In the past six years, only the most serious child abuse cases were investigated, and of these less than half received social services. With limited funds there are longer delays in responding to reports and a greater chance of careless and inadequate investigations, reporting, and follow-up. According to the Children's Defense Fund, "Inadequate funding also means inadequate numbers of staff, inadequate resources to hire and retain qualified workers, inadequate staff training and supports, and high turnover."{2}

At a time when reports of child abuse have quadrupled, Texas Child Protective Services experienced a 26 percent reduction in staff due to budgetary restrictions. The result is an imbalance in staff-to-client ratio which will force the state to direct its efforts toward crisis intervention rather than prevention and treatment. More frightening headlines will be generated about abused Texas children until child protection workers are given sufficient resources and

support to investigate thoroughly every case that comes across their desks.

The cost to Texas society as a whole is tremendous, for when these children begin to enter adolescence, they are more likely than others to exhibit self-destructive, antisocial behaviors. They may run away, drop out of school, abuse drugs and alcohol, or commit a crime. Nearly one-third of the children who leave home are running away from physical or sexual abuse, and 40 percent are running from other family problems such as parental alcoholism or marital conflict. Most children who run away from home return within a short period of time.{29} However, their reasons for leaving are likely not resolved, and trouble may erupt in other areas of their lives.

If, however, the child remains "on the run," he or she is likely to be homeless. Homeless children are at increased risk of being enticed or coerced into activities such as prostitution or taking drugs. They are more likely to come in contact with the formal juvenile justice system. Often they have histories of abuse and neglect or serious emotional problems.{2}

When abused and troubled children become parents, they tend to perpetuate self-destructive conditions with their own children. Thirty percent of adults who were extremely neglected or physically or sexually abused as children themselves become abusive parents.{2} Since studies have shown that there is a generational repetition, early intervention programs stand a good chance of breaking the cycle.

When Houstonians were surveyed in 1985, a majority believed child abuse was a more serious social problem than crime; however, they were at a loss as to how to prevent child abuse.{72} By contrast, a

Lou Harris public opinion poll in 1986 found that two-thirds of those polled believed that they personally could help prevent child abuse, with nearly one-fourth indicating that they had taken specific steps toward prevention.{73} These steps included reporting someone for abuse, not abusing or hitting their own children, working as a volunteer or counselor, speaking to a friend or relative about abuse, educating adults on how to avoid being abusive of children, stopping someone from hitting a child, contributing money to prevent child abuse, and serving as foster parents.{73}

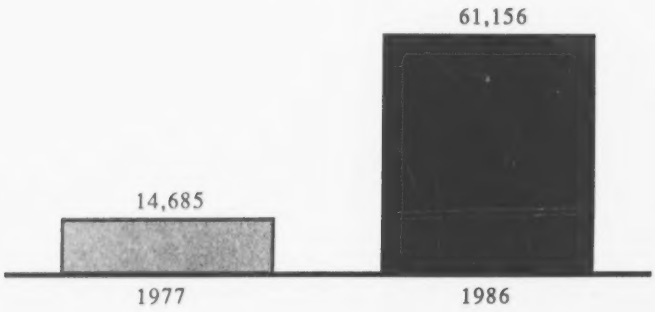
While these are examples of how each one of us, as a Texas citizen, can significantly alter the development of a child, specific actions at the state level could ensure that all families in need of basic life supports receive adequate food, shelter, health care, and opportunities for employment.

39

Confirmed cases of child abuse and neglect in Texas have quadrupled over the last ten years.

In 1977, there were 14,685 confirmed cases of child abuse and neglect. In 1986, there were 61,156 cases. The percentage of confirmed physical neglect reports has been declining in the past few years, but that decrease has been offset by an increase in confirmed reports of physical and sexual abuse.{29} While some of the reporting is attributable to heightened public awareness, there is evidence that the increased number of reports is largely due to a *real* increase in the number of abused and neglected children in Texas.

CONFIRMED
CASES OF CHILD ABUSE
AND NEGLECT IN TEXAS



40

More than half of the confirmed victims of sexual abuse are under ten years of age.{29}

Over 80 percent of these children are girls, perhaps reflecting the fact that girls are more likely to be abused by adult family members.{29} Sexually abused boys--more likely abused by persons outside the family--are usually reported to law enforcement agencies rather than child protective services. In 1986, 8,911 children were confirmed as being victims of sexual abuse.{29}

It is estimated that one of every four children will be sexually abused by the age of ten.{74} This abuse may come from an older child or a teenager.

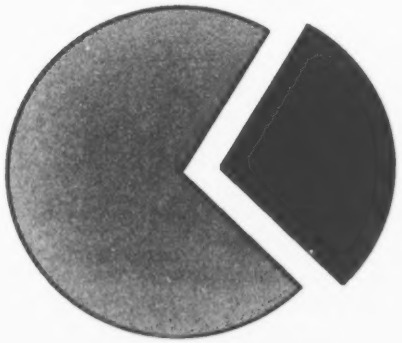
The National Center for Missing and Exploited Children indicates that seven of ten girls and four of ten boys who run away have been sexually abused by a nonfamily member.

41

Over a one-year period, more than 4,400 Texas babies under 12 months were abused and neglected.

In 1986, one-half of all Texas victims of child abuse and neglect were age six and younger, and 29 percent of these victims were under four years of age. There were 17,778 children under four who were victims of child abuse and neglect.{29}

ABUSED AND NEGLECTED CHILDREN
UNDER 18 IN TEXAS



42

Of the Texas women using family violence shelters in 1986, 87 percent had children.

Sixty-six percent of these women had been battered for one or more years, and 27 percent reported that at least one of the children in the family had been battered.{29}

43

Over a two-year period, 2,649 Texas children 12 years old and younger were kidnapped.{75}

Forty-four percent of these children were three to five years of age, 38 percent were six to twelve, and 18 percent were infants, two years of age and under. Between 1986 and 1987, kidnappings of three to five year olds almost doubled.{75}

The majority of these kidnappings are family-related. However, no official figures exist on the number of missing children who are kidnapped by a parent.{76} Between 1986 and 1988, Texas Department of Public Safety Missing Persons Clearinghouse recorded 351 active parental abduction cases.{77}

Noncustodial parental kidnappings adversely affect children's lives by uprooting them from their homes, depriving them of a life with the other parent, and forcing them to live "on the run."{78}

44

In a six-month period, 55,900 juveniles age 16 and under were arrested in Texas.{79}

Forty percent were for thefts, including burglary, motor vehicle theft, and vandalism. Ten percent were for drug- and alcohol-related violations, including possession (1,913), drunkenness (1,468), and driving under the influence of alcohol (169).{79}

In a single six-month period, children under 17 were arrested for 43 murders, 724 aggravated assaults, and 96 forcible rapes.{79}

45

Fires set by Texas children under 16 account for $7 to $8 million in property damage every year.{80}

Nationally, juveniles accounted for 40 percent of arson arrests in 1986, with almost 7 percent of those arrests involving children under ten.{81} Arson was the largest single cause of property damage by fire, accounting for more than one of every four dollars lost in buildings which burned. In Texas, arson was the cause of more than $51 million in property damage during 1986.{82}

46

In one year, there was an 11 percent increase in Texas children 10 to 12 years old who were referred to juvenile probation departments.

In addition, there was an increase of almost 20 percent for 13 year olds. For both of these age groups, most of these referrals were due to misdemeanor offenses and running away.{83}

47

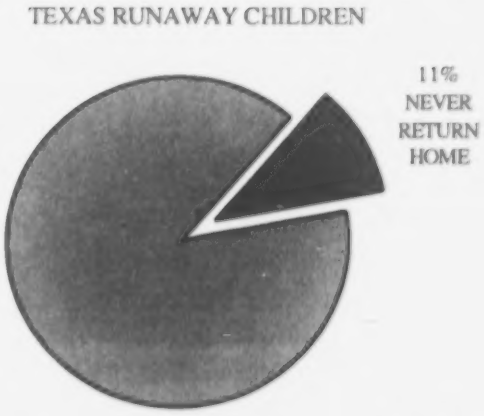
In 1985, more than five percent of all commitments to Texas Youth Commission schools were Mexican nationals.

Undocumented Mexican juveniles use more than a quarter of the resources of probation departments in areas that border Mexico. In 1985, cost of their treatment was over two million dollars.{84}

48

More than 11,000 Texas children ran away from their homes in 1986 and did not return.{29}

In one year, an estimated 100,000 Texas families had at least one child who ran away from home. Very few of these children ever reach public counseling and shelter services.{85} In 1986, 3,606 truant and runaway youths were served by counseling or shelter services around the state.{29}



CHILD CARE

Everyone agrees that children need nurturing and supervision from someone who cares. This issue is not debatable, but the kind of care and who should provide it are matters of great concern today. With the decline of the extended family and the rise in the number of working mothers, the need for outside child care in Texas has grown dramatically. Most of these mothers are working because they must, either as the sole provider for their children or for an essential second income. Day care is fundamental to keeping many of them fully participating in the work force.

Affordability, availability, and quality are the key issues parents face. Private day care ranges from $3,000 to more than $5,000 per year per child, and many Texas families cannot afford such expense even if both parents work full time.{2} Day care is typically the second highest expense for the average American family, just below housing. For a poor family of three, the cost represents one-third to one-half of the total family income.{2} Even if parents can afford the fees, some areas of the state are without adequate child care resources. Rural areas and poor urban neighborhoods often have few, if any, quality facilities from which to choose. Care for children with chronic health problems or respite care to benefit parents of children with serious illnesses are even more difficult to find, much less afford.

In areas where child care is available and parents can afford it, the proper child care facility must be selected--one that meets both the child's needs and the parents' schedules. Most working parents have to rely on a variety of child care arrangements to accommodate their schedules. In New York City, half of the families surveyed used arrangements for multiple child care,

with 20 percent using more than two caregivers in one day.{86} Not unlike New Yorkers, Texas families are juggling different child care providers and hoping that the transition from one caregiver to the next goes smoothly for their children. Difficulties in resolving these situations often force parents to compromise quality for cost and convenience.

If one has an infant or toddler, the day home down the street might be just the solution to the problem of caring for a child during working hours. It is nearby and probably affordable; the caregiver is warm and friendly; and there are not too many children. However, family day homes are the one type of child-care facility that has touched off the most debate among child-care professionals and regulators.{87} Many day homes are operated outside the law, with hazardous conditions such as unanchored swing sets and unsafe backyards, as in the case of Jessica McClure, a toddler who fell into an abandoned well at an unregistered day home in Midland. According to the Select Committee on Children, Youth and Families, as many as 94 percent of the day home caregivers are not licensed or registered with the state where they are located.{88} While the number of day care facilities in Texas has doubled over the past decade, the Texas Department of Human Services' Childcare Licensing budget has been cut in half.{87}

Because there is little money in day care, some facilities take shortcuts by hiring ill-qualified staff, paying them minimum wage or even less. According to The Children's Defense Fund, day-care personnel rank in the lowest ten percent of U.S. wage earners.{89} They earn less than a bartender or parking lot attendant. Given

such low salaries, it is not surprising that child-care centers experience a high turnover rate in staff, approximately 36 percent yearly.{89} Most are without a retirement plan or health care benefits.

Families of school age children face a shortage of day care for hours after school and during summer vacations. As the number of working mothers has increased, so has the number of children left to care for themselves. Latchkey children are youngsters who are unsupervised before and after school. For them, some portion of each day is spent alone. During that time they may attend community recreational centers, stay home alone, be taken care of by an underage brother or sister, or roam the neighborhood. How many Texas children care for themselves after school? The numbers are unknown but believed to be growing at an alarming rate.

What are governments doing to help parents in this area? The federal government and many state governments are doing little to help parents pay for child care or, for that matter, to help parents find quality, affordable child care through resource and referral agencies. This omission has especially hurt the low-income parent and the parent who may be making the transition from welfare to self-sufficiency. Title XX Social Services Block Grant is a federally funded block grant that enables states to provide a wide range of social programs including protective services, family planning, and help to poor families in paying for child care. It is the largest direct source of federal support for child care.{2} In the first half of the 1980s, these federal funds were the only public source of support for child care in Texas.{90}

Title XX funds also provide foster care for those children who have been emotionally or physically abused or who must be removed temporarily from a dysfunctional family environment. Most children in state-sponsored foster care facilities come from dysfunctional families and have emotional and behavioral problems; a small portion have serious physical or mental disabilities.

The Adoption Assistance and Child Welfare Act of 1980--which encouraged states to prevent unnecessary out-of-home placements and ensure permanent placement of all foster care children--helped to decrease the number of Texas children in foster care and reduce the time spent there. However, adoptions from foster care placements in Texas remained woefully low between 1978 and 1986.{29} A study on adoption procedures in Maryland revealed that once a child had entered the foster care system, an average of 5.1 years passed before the child was adopted.{2} Only a small percentage, less than ten percent, of the Texas children in foster family care are adopted, leaving over ninety percent who will "age out" of the system in their late teens and be without family or friends for support.{29}

Clearly Texas, like the nation, faces a growing crisis in child care. Failure to spend money now on child care, especially for low-income families, will be reflected in costs to Texas later--in paying AFDC and Medicaid benefits to these families, in processing many of these children through protective services or the juvenile justice system, and in lost human potential and untapped resources. According to The Children's Defense Fund, providing child-care support to low-income working families so they can be self-sufficient

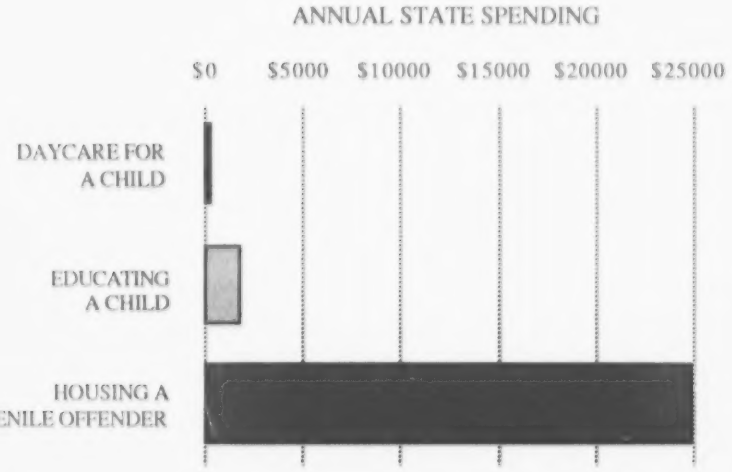
would cost only 38 percent of the amount required to provide AFDC and Medicaid benefits to these families.{2}

49

Texas spends about $113 per year providing support for one child to receive subsidized day care.{91}

This is how much the state is paying independent of any federal subsidies. The state also spends approximately $24,890 per year housing one juvenile offender in a training school{5} and $1,790 per year educating one child in public school.

The amount it costs to keep a child in a Texas Youth Commission facility could provide child care for two children in a low-income single- or two-parent Texas family for four years--or until both children were able to attend public school. Or, the monies could enable 40 AFDC-eligible Texas families to rise out of poverty, receiving slightly more than the monthly income that meets the federal poverty guidelines.



50

Seventeen percent of two-parent working families in Texas have children under six years of age.

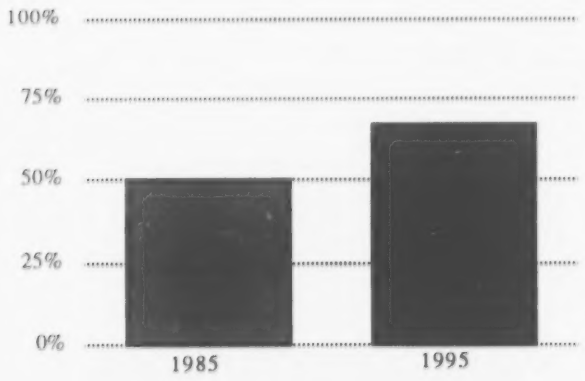
Approximately 35 percent of the Texas labor force is comprised of working parents with children 17 years or younger, whereas less than ten percent of the Texas labor force is made up of what is considered traditional family heads (earning father with mother at home) with children 17 years and younger.{92}

51

Almost 50 percent of Texas mothers with children under age six are employed outside the home.{4}

For children ages six to seventeen years, the percentage of working mothers increases to 63 percent.{4} By 1995, two out of three preschoolers will be children of mothers who work. At that same time, three out of four school-aged boys and girls will be children of employed mothers.{93}

PERCENT OF TEXAS WORKING MOTHERS WITH PRESCHOOLERS



52

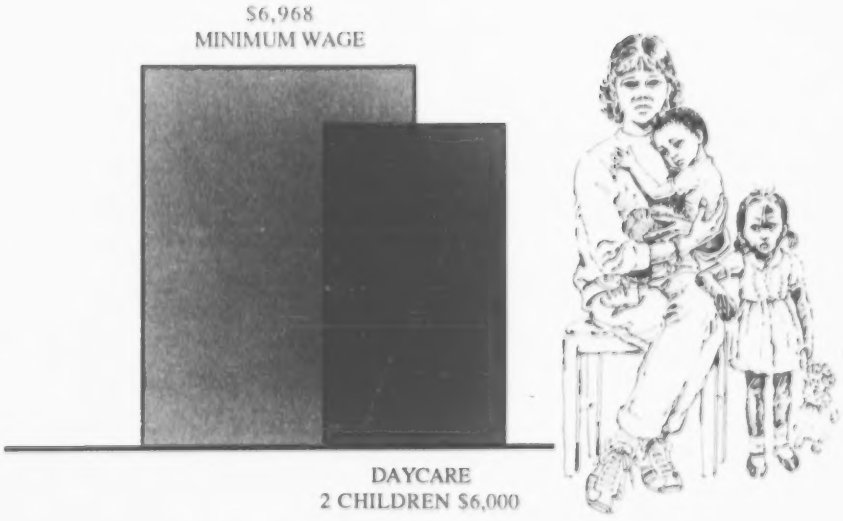
In 1986, 36 percent of the Texas children in foster care were under six years of age.{29}

In 1986, there were 5,132 children in foster care. Some 68 percent were in the care of state-sponsored foster families; approximately 4 percent lived in foster group homes; 13 percent were in residential treatment centers and therapeutic camps; 6 percent were in private child care facilities; 3 percent were in emergency shelters; and 6 percent were in public and private institutions for the mentally retarded or emotionally disturbed.{29}

53

Having two children in child care costs a single Texas mother earning minimum wage 86 percent of her annual income.

...that is, if one child is under 6 and child care for two costs an average of $6,000 per year.{2} This leaves her with only $968 per year, or $80 per month, to pay for food, rent, utility bills, transportation, and other needs such as clothing, health care, and unexpected costs.



54

Only seven percent of the eligible Texas children in poverty are being served by subsidized day-care programs.{1}

Because benefits have not paralleled inflation rates, 25 percent fewer Texas children are being served by subsidized day care centers than ten years ago.{1}

Between 1984 and 1987, the combined state and federal dollar amount for subsidized day care remained just under 32 million. However, legislature-appropriated funding increased approximately 3.5 million in 1988, and in 1989 the appropriated amount for child day care will be 35.9 million.{90} While this is a move in the right direction, the current funding level falls far short of meeting the day care needs of poor Texas children.

Due to a high matching criterion, many economically depressed areas of Texas are unable to finance quality child-care centers. The state government requires contracted child-care centers to match as much as 30 percent of their operating costs in order to receive federal or state funds.{94} In metropolitan areas this local match is supplied by community organizations or the United Way. Small Texas towns and rural areas have few resources for generating such funds.

55

An estimated 30,000 Texas children under the age of six are left to care for themselves while their parents work.{95}

This estimate is based on a ten-year-old survey. The number of latchkey children in Texas is as yet undetermined.{1} It is unlikely that future surveys will reveal an accurate account of latchkey children since parents are reluctant to report that they leave their children at home alone and unsupervised.

TOWARD PREVENTION

The old saying, "an ounce of prevention is worth a pound of cure," still holds true today. Where prevention is possible, we reduce not only monetary costs but, more importantly, human costs. Efforts at prevention of problems such as juvenile delinquency, school dropout, teenage pregnancy, and inadequate education begin with investments that enable all families to meet their children's needs better. All Texas parents should be able to support their families, provide each member with regular and continuous medical care, and provide their young children with day care and their school-aged children with appropriate supervision after school and during summer vacations. Lack of these requisites will cost the state in many ways, including remedial education programs and continued public assistance.

When the long-range financial implications for prevention and crisis intervention are compared, it is difficult to understand why prevention fails to receive sufficient support. Investing as little as $1 has a tremendous influence on the future lives of many poor Texas children. For example, for every $1 invested in WIC, the state saves as much as $3 in short-term hospital costs. And, for every $1 spent on comprehensive prenatal care services, the state saves $2 in health care costs for children receiving EPSDT services. Moreover, for every $1 spent on childhood immunization programs, the state saves $10 in later medical costs.{96} Not only does $1 save in medical costs but investing the same amount in preschool education is likely to return $6 in taxpayer savings through lower special education costs, public welfare costs, and costs of crime. Also, early educational intervention for disabled children can save the school

districts as much as $1,560 per handicapped child.{97}

Such interventions can be highly effective, but they have not been strongly endorsed by the federal government. As late as the fall of 1987, the Reagan administration argued for further cutbacks in children's nutrition programs (e.g., school lunches and breakfasts), a clear sign that health care for children has not been a top priority. Federal block grants for preventive health efforts have been cut by one-third, and most ongoing plans serve fewer than half of those eligible.

Prevention programs such as Head Start and Chapter 1 compensatory education, while yielding impressive results over the past ten to fifteen years, are not in every Texas county. And, where they do exist, some need restructuring and expanding.{2}

Increased public awareness about the need for educational reform and for proper child care in the early years has brought about organized lobbying at the state and national levels. But early childhood policy has just begun to be established, and some of the problems of coordination, cost, quality, and even basic objectives need to be solved before high quality services are integrated into Texas communities.{98}

For instance, day care and preschool are viewed as separate entities--one providing custodial care and the other educational instruction. However, they provide a continuum of care for the young child. Full-day child care that combines effective aspects of preschool and early childhood development can lay the groundwork for a child's future academic career. Further, it offers a combination especially beneficial to the poor child and the two-parent working family with an inflexible schedule.

Periodic attempts are made to close service gaps and expand coverage. During 1987-88, for example, a Welfare Reform Act was introduced in the U.S. Congress seeking to establish a new education, training, and employment approach for welfare recipients. This plan would expand supportive services and also extend AFDC payments to two-parent unemployed families.

If this proposal is adopted by Texas, there will be relatively few two-parent families left in severe poverty. For the working poor, limited short-term wage or earned income supports, in the form of transitional services, have been proposed which will link these individuals to existing manpower programs and provide a more comprehensive system of support.{99} However, there will still be people who are not able to find work and additional interventions have been suggested for them, including a government jobs program paying minimum wage. For those few who cannot work at even the most menial of jobs, transitional assistance may be offered that will train and educate.{99}

A plan of uniform guaranteed child support which will hold fathers responsible and remove the mothers from the position of enforcing child support has also been advocated. If child support is combined with an expanded earned income tax credit and a refundable tax credit for children, then a mother working part-time could conceivably support her family above the poverty line.{99} These large-scale welfare/security reforms have implications for prevention, affecting as they do family formation, the well-being of children, and parental attitudes toward work.{100}

Enacting legislation that focuses on prevention is one way of strengthening the

commitment to the positive growth and development of Texas children. It is a prescription designed to ensure that every child in this state can reach his or her full potential for becoming a strong, healthy, productive, and self-sufficient adult. The children of today--the focus of this book--will become the work force of the 21st century. They will be expected to maintain the state's standard of living as well as bear the nation's enormous debt, while upholding a growing aged and retired population and meeting the increasing challenge of economic competition from abroad. Parents, concerned citizens, and employers cannot afford to ignore, or gamble with, the future of our state's most precious resource, its children.

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